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A. D. GNAGEY, - - - EDITOR.

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## SISTER DICKEY'S WITHDRAWAL.

The following letter was sent to the chairman of Indiana State Conference committee on credentials, and submitted to us for publication.

SIDNEY, IND., Nov. 12th, 1894.

S. S. HOFFMAN, AKRON, IND.,

DEAR BRO. IN CHRIST:—Your letter came to-day and as it is a letter of inquiry as to my withdrawal from the Brethren church, I will proceed at once to answer. I did not appear at conference or send my certificate because I did not wish to be a member of the conference or the Brethren church. The Brethren church has not misused me, neither do I withdraw because of malice or contention but because my knowledge of God's holy word and the light of the holy spirit will not lead me to hold my membership with a church that will either endorse or tolerate secret societies, worldly conformity, or revellings and such like; and besides this I am convinced that sectism itself is sin.

"A man that is a heretic, after the first or second admonition reject; knowing he that is such, is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself." Titus iii, 10, 11. "The church of God is without spot or wrinkle." Eph. v, 27. "It is built by Jesus." Matt. xvi, 18. Christ is the door." John. x, 9. "Christ is the foundation." I Cor. iii, 11. "Christ is our law giver." Isa. xxxiii, 22. "The Gospel is the only discipline." Matt. xxviii, 19, 20. "The class book is kept in heaven." Heb. xii, 23. "The church of God is pure." II Cor. xi, 2. "The nine gifts spoken of in I Cor. 12, are all in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is in the church." John. xiv, 17. "God sets the members in the body as it pleases him." I Cor. xii, 18. "We cannot abide in Christ, and commit sin." I John. iii, 6 10. "We dare not tolerate secret societies or fellowship them." Lev. v, 4, 5; Eph. v, 11, 12, 13; II Cor. vi, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18; Rom. xii, 1, 2.

Yours in Jesus,

ESTHER L. DICKEY.

### REMARKS.

We have no unkind words for sister Dickey. She has a right to her opinion concerning the interpretation of certain passages of scripture. And if her "opinions" so conflict with the teachings of the Brethren church, that she can no longer conscientiously preach its doctrines, it is better that she should go somewhere else. And if the purity of her life forbids association with us, it is better again that she should go out from among us. But let us examine the several parts of her letter with scripture references, and see whether her course is a reasonable one.

1. "My knowledge of God's Holy Word and the light of the Holy Spirit will not lead me to hold my membership with a church that will either endorse or tolerate

secret societies." In the first place the Brethren church does not *endorse* secret societies; it never did, and it is not likely that it ever will. Every man and woman, every church and society, in this world of sin and wickedness must *tolerate* some things they cannot *endorse*.

2. She says, "I am convinced that sectism itself is sin." Then why persist in *creating* schisms, and multiplying *the already too many schisms*? The Brethren church is *opposed* to schisms, and that is why it cannot commend the course pursued by sister Dickey, which course is *decidedly* schismatic in its tendencies.

3. She further says: "A man that is a heretic after the first or second admonition reject." Who is the heretic in this case? On what ground is a man found guilty of heresy? What is the standard? What is the basis of judgment? The scriptures, you say. Whose interpretation of it, sister Dickey's or the church's? What is the *heresy* of which Paul speaks in the reference quoted by sister Dickey? Tit. iii, 10-11. Study the context with this text. "*Greek heresy* originally meant a *division*, resulting from individual self-will; the individual doing and teaching what he chose independently of the teaching and practice of the church." Accepting this definition of heresy, we will let our readers draw their own conclusions as to who is guilty of the charge.

4. The next reference or scripture quotations in the letter are these: "The church of God is without spot or wrinkle." Eph. v, 27; "the church of God is pure." II Cor. xi, 2. These scriptures do not apply *at all* to the church militant, but to the church triumphant. Mark that Paul does not say, present chaste *virgins*, but a *chaste virgin*—the church as a *whole* constitutes the *Bride* which Paul was helping to prepare for presentation to the Lord, *at his second coming* when the heavenly marriage shall take place. Matthew xxv, 6, Revelation xix, 7-9. What Paul here says he desires to do, Christ himself is said to do in a fuller sense; and this brings us to the other quotation. Eph. v, 27, where Christ speaks of himself as the one who would present the church glorious as the Bride, to himself at his second coming. "Not having spot or wrinkle." Does this mean that the visible members of the visible church are to be without "spot or wrinkle?" Certainly not. The reference is to the *church at Christ's second coming*. Does not the church contain the clean and unclean together? Yes. Did not Christ predict that it would be so? He did, or else what means the parable in which the man without the wedding garment entered the wedding room; or the par-

able of the good and the bad fish taken together? "So shall it be at the end of the world; the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just." The plain meaning is, that when Christ—the Bridegroom—shall come, then the Bride, that is the *church*, being cut off from evil forever, shall be presented pure and without spot or wrinkle. The church is now designated as holy because of her ideal and ultimate destination.

The church of God has had within itself good and bad from the day of its organization to the present, and will have, so long as it remains in this world of conflict with sin and temptation. Turn to II Tim. ii, 20, 21 and read: "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, *The Lord knoweth them that are his*. But in a great house (the visible professing christian church) there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor." What does this teach? The church is built on a sure foundation, the "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." But the church being a great house, must of necessity gather within itself people both good and bad, and they will remain or continue in the same church until the judgment makes the everlasting distinction. *Nowhere in the entire word of God are the individual members of the church militant designated as pure, holy and spotless*. Who are *we* that set ourselves up as judges in this matter as to who is pure or impure? This is the prerogative of the Lord.

5. Still another scripture must be noticed. Sister Dickey says: "We cannot abide in Christ and commit sin." I John iii, 6-10. This is true in a sense. Such a one will not *willingly* or *knowingly* commit sin. *But the same apostle who wrote these words also wrote these*: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. I John i, 9. Which of these scriptures tells the truth? Would it not be better to take a common sense view of these scriptures and interpret them according to the plain meaning intended by the writer? In an experience of sixteen years in the Master's service, *it has not been our fortune to become acquainted with a single individual who was without spot or wrinkle*. Besides in all history, sacred and secular, we find none other sinless, but only Jesus. Our Savior stood before a world of sin and iniquity, and made a challenge which has never been accepted *and which no other mortal has ever dared to make*, namely, "WHICH OF YOU CONVINCETH ME OF SIN?" YET MORE, WITH THE AID OF HIS GRACE AND THE LIGHT OF HIS EXMPLE, THE VERY BRIGHTEST SAINTS,